
**Report to
The Vermont Legislature**

**GENERAL ASSISTANCE ANNUAL REPORT
In Accordance with 33 V.S.A. 2115**

Submitted to: Joint Fiscal Committee
House Appropriations Committee
House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee
House Human Services Committee
Senate Appropriations Committee
Senate Health and Welfare Committee

Submitted by: Sean Brown, Commissioner, Department for Children and Families

Prepared by: Mark Eley, General Assistance Program Director

Report Date: September 1st, 2020



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Executive Summary

The General Assistance program is a day-to-day crisis abatement program designed to serve the neediest Vermonters. The General Assistance program is administered by the Economic Services Division of the Department for Children and Families.

General Assistance benefits are divided into three categories: Personal Needs, Support Services, and Temporary Housing. Among the three benefits categories, Temporary Housing and Burial Assistance remain budgetary pressure points.

The Department for Children and Families experienced a busy cold weather season, followed by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020. Meeting the public health needs of Vermonters forced DCF to make significant changes to the General Assistance program. Using authority granted under Act 140, Section 13 and Act 91, Section 4, DCF altered General Assistance program rules to expand eligibility for temporary housing and move Vermonters from congregate shelter settings to hotels. The result of this move has been that, at the time of the writing of this report, Vermont has not seen a death due to COVID-19 among the homeless population.

Introduction

Temporary housing data for this report was collected from July 2019 through February 2020 by Economic Services' 12 district offices. Data collected includes:

- Total number of emergency housing requests
- Emergency housing requests granted/denied
- Number of households without children granted/denied housing
- Number of families granted/denied housing
- Number of adults and children in households requesting and granted housing
- Number of eligible catastrophic requests/number granted
- Number of categorically eligible vulnerable population requests/number granted
- Number of eligible vulnerable population points requests/number granted
- Total number of nights authorized/average cost per night/total cost for authorized nights
- Number of Adverse Weather Condition (AWC) grants/number of adults granted under AWC/number of children granted under AWC
- Number of AWC nights authorized/average cost per night/total cost for AWC nights authorized

Beginning on March 17th, the Department for Children and Families began housing Vermonters due to the impact of COVID-19. Consequently, the Economic Services Division's 12 district offices began tracking housing data related to the COVID-19 pandemic. On April 3, 2020, the tracking of this data was standardized, and that method was used through the end of the fiscal year. This information is presented separately from the temporary housing data listed above.

Evaluation of the General Assistance Program During Fiscal Year 2020

The General Assistance program is a day-to-day crisis abatement program, administered by the Economic Services Division of the Department for Children and Families. General Assistance is divided into three categories: Personal Needs, Support Services, and Temporary Housing.

Personal Needs includes a cash benefit, rental and mortgage assistance, and room rental payments. Although the Department for Children and Families (DCF) spending in this category exceeded the amount budgeted, overall spending in this category decreased from fiscal year 2019.

During the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic, DCF waived some requirements of Personal Needs eligibility. For example, applicants were no longer required to provide medical documentation, as access to health providers was limited by the pandemic. All such waivers expired on August 1st.

Support Services includes transportation benefits, physician services, dental services, prescription assistance, and burial assistance. Burial assistance remains the primary expenditure in this category. Spending on burial assistance increased in fiscal year 2020, as did total spending in this category. Spending on Support Services exceeded the budgeted amount.

Temporary housing includes subcategories of catastrophic, vulnerable population, and adverse weather conditions (AWC). While previous years have shown an increase in both the number of households granted and the total number of nights granted, fiscal year 2020 saw a slight decrease in the number of households granted and a 14 percent decrease in the number of nights granted. This cannot be attributed to a decrease in the number of AWC nights, which saw a very slight increase in fiscal year 2020.

| Statewide 3 Year Comparison 2018 - 2020 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-------------|--------------|
| July - February | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Household Grants Unduplicated | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | Catastrophic | | Auto Vuln | | | | | | | |
| July '19 - Feb. '20 | # Households Granted | # Adults | # Children | DV | Other | 65+ | SSI | Under 6 | Preg 3rd | Other | AWC | # HP Nights | # Nights |
| TOTALS | 2154 | 2445 | 968 | 456 | 297 | 12 | 368 | 122 | 11 | 10 | 877 | 5648 | 37721 |
| July '18 - Feb. '19 | # Households Granted | # Adults | # Children | DV | Other | 65+ | SSI | Under 6 | Preg 3rd | Other | AWC | # HP Nights | # Nights |
| TOTALS | 2184 | 2519 | 1147 | 465 | 288 | 10 | 360 | 182 | 5 | 11 | 863 | 6153 | 43959 |
| July '17 - Feb. '18 | # Households Granted | # Adults | # Children | DV | Other | 65+ | SSI | Under 6 | Preg 3rd | Other | AWC | # HP Nights | # Nights |
| TOTALS | 1904 | 2148 | 937 | 366 | 197 | 7 | 321 | 146 | 6 | 17 | 844 | 6370 | 30108 |

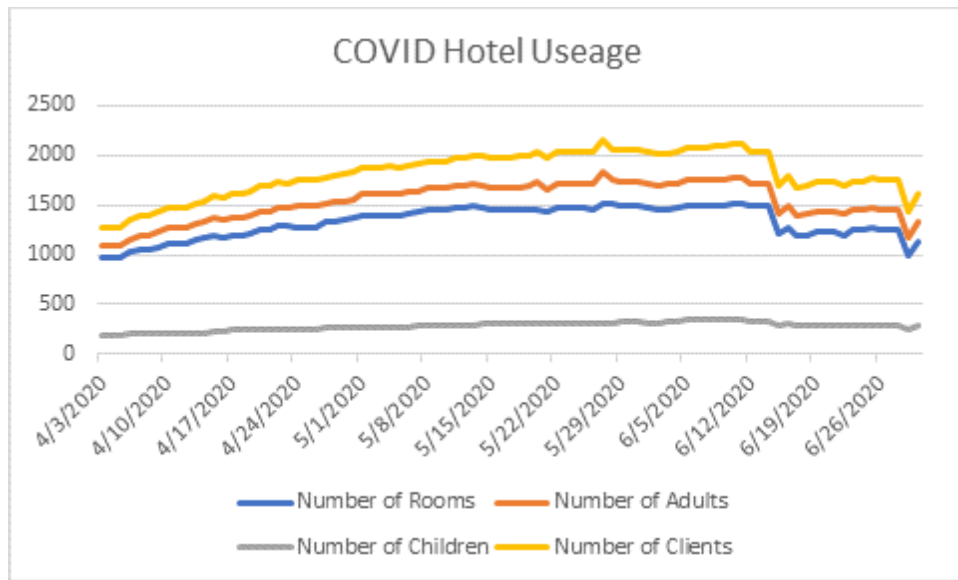
The General Assistance (GA) program continues to make community investments through the Housing Opportunity Grant Program (HOP). The GA program supports housing agencies, local

shelters, and survivors of domestic violence through HOP grants. The table below outlines state fiscal year 2020 awards.

| AHS District | ORGANIZATION/PROGRAM | NOTES | TOTAL GA AWARD 2020 |
|---------------------------|---|--|---------------------|
| Barre | Good Samaritan Haven | Continued support for expanded emergency shelter capacity in Montpelier and Barre, including 33 seasonal shelter beds | \$ 332,977 |
| Barre | Capstone Community Action | Continued support for six 2-bedroom emergency apartments for families experiencing homelessness | \$ 138,012 |
| Bennington | Bennington Coalition for the Homeless | Continued support for expanded 16 bed year-round emergency shelter capacity for single adults | \$ 75,000 |
| Bennington | Project Against Violent Encounters (PAVE) | Continued support for expanded emergency shelter capacity for victims fleeing domestic violence (5 additional rooms) and funds for the agency to meet overflow capacity needs | \$ 95,000 |
| Brattleboro | Groundworks Collaborative | Continued support for 33-bed seasonal shelter for adults | \$ 143,300 |
| Brattleboro | Southeastern Vermont Community Action | Continued support for part-time motel outreach position | \$ 26,900 |
| Brattleboro | Women's Freedom Center | Continued support for expanded emergency shelter to serve victims fleeing domestic violence (6 additional rooms) and \$36 funds for the agency to meet overflow capacity needs | \$ 237,946 |
| Burlington | Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity | Extreme cold weather emergency shelter, for as needed emergency shelter capacity | \$ 10,000 |
| Burlington | Committee on Temporary Shelter (COTS) | Preserve 4 beds of emergency shelter at the Waystation | \$ 32,000 |
| Burlington | ANEW Place | Continued support (with new project administrator) for the 37-bed seasonal emergency shelter for adults | \$ 264,790 |
| Hartford | Upper Valley Haven | Continued support for 10 bed seasonal emergency shelter for adults | \$ 55,428 |
| Lamoille | Lamoille Community House | Continued support for 12 bed seasonal emergency shelter for adults | \$ 84,898 |
| Middlebury | Charter House Coalition | Continued support for 3 bedrooms of seasonal emergency shelter capacity for families | \$ 27,500 |
| Middlebury | John Graham | Continued support for two 2-bedroom emergency apartments for families and victims fleeing domestic violence | \$ 24,720 |
| Rutland | BROC Community Action in Southwestern Vermont | Extreme cold weather emergency shelter, for as needed emergency shelter capacity | \$ 10,000 |
| Rutland | New Story Center | Continued support for expanded emergency shelter to serve victims fleeing domestic violence (3 additional rooms) and funds for the agency to meet overflow capacity needs | \$ 345,000 |
| St. Albans | Voices Against Violence | New expanded emergency shelter capacity for victims fleeing domestic violence and funds for the agency to use motels to meet overflow capacity needs | \$ 126,540 |
| St. Johnsbury and Newport | Umbrella | New expanded emergency shelter capacity (apartments) for victims fleeing domestic violence and funds for the agency to use motels to meet overflow capacity needs | \$ 90,000 |
| St. Johnsbury | Northeast Kingdom Community Action | Continued support for 10 bed seasonal emergency shelter for adults | \$ 88,880 |
| | TOTAL | | \$ 2,208,891 |

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, DCF had proposed to transition away from the motel voucher program and towards a community-based model of housing response. The initial proposal had this transition effective July 1, 2020. Although some concerns had been expressed by community partners and legislators around the timeline of that effort, the proposal was moving forward through the legislature via the budget process. The Department scheduled operational workdays with community partners and provided information regarding the geographic allocations of community resources in addition to guidance on the implementation process. The pandemic, however, derailed this initiative as it had been proposed. Instead, efforts by the Department focused on the immediate response to the threat posed by COVID and the need to provide safe, stable housing for households experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity at a time when public health guidance was mandating individuals to stay home and be stay safe.

COVID Housing



On March 17, 2020, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) expanded eligibility for temporary housing to include individuals who met conditions that made them “hyper-vulnerable” to COVID-19.

On June 1st, DCF implemented a “Period of Ineligibility” for temporary housing applicants asked to leave a hotel due to their behavior. Additionally, beginning June 1st, DCF required applicants to work with housing case managers on a plan to secure permanent housing.

Beginning June 15th, DCF began requiring households with income above the Reach Up basic needs standard for a household of their size to contribute 30% of their income to their own housing. For a household of one, this includes individuals with income above \$585 per month. For a household of two, this includes households with income of more than \$771 per month.

On July 13th, DCF implemented an income threshold for the temporary housing program. DCF chose 185% of the Federal Poverty Level as the income limit for temporary housing; this mirrors the 3Squares Vermont program.

Effective July 16th, DCF amended the Period of Ineligibility to include a 15-day Period of Ineligibility for a client’s first exit from a hotel due to behavior. All subsequent exits result in a 30-day Period of Ineligibility.

On July 17th, DCF informed General Assistance clients that the Department would not house them in a hotel if appropriate shelter space is available.

Finally, on July 29th, DCF announced that applicants who voluntarily left housing in the previous 90 days would not be eligible for temporary housing.

On August 11th, DCF posted the current COVID housing rules on its public website. The rules are included in Appendix F in this report.

Adverse Weather Conditions

The table below represents Adverse Weather Conditions (AWC) data for the 2019-2020 season. This data does not include the month of March 2020, as this is when DCF began housing applicants due to COVID-19. DCF spent \$452,734 on AWC housing during fiscal year 2020.

Total Number of AWC Days Per Month

| | |
|--------|-----|
| NOV | 22 |
| DEC | 27 |
| JAN | 27 |
| FEB | 25 |
| TOTALS | 101 |

Plan for Continued Implementation of the General Assistance Program

Under Act 140 Section 13, and Act 91 Section 4, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) has the authority to waive or vary rules to meet the public health needs of Vermonters. DCF has made significant changes to the General Assistance program to meet public health needs and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the summer of 2020, DCF has gradually reinstated the structure and rules of the temporary housing program. At the same time, DCF has worked to connect applicants with housing case management services with the long-term goal of connecting applicants to housing vouchers and permanent housing. Due to the difficult public health situation, DCF plans to continue making all necessary changes to meet the needs of Vermonters.

Additionally, the Agency of Human Services (AHS) has made effectively ending family homelessness a goal of its COVID-19 Housing Recovery Plan. The plan will connect people on a path to permanent, safe housing as quickly as possible and reduce motel utilization. AHS will use Coronavirus Relief Funds authorized under the CARES Act to assist Vermonters in need of housing and reduce homelessness in the state. However, homelessness and housing insecurity remain ongoing issues the state must contend with, and temporary housing remains a critical piece of supporting Vermonters in crisis.

Recommendations for Changes to the General Assistance Program

In the 2019 report to the Legislature, the Department stated:

It has become clear during our work with stakeholders, clients, and staff that the most direct way to confront the challenge is moving away from a reliance on the motel voucher program and towards community-based responses to the housing crisis. In doing so, DCF could shift the entirety of the GA emergency housing budget to communities for the identification and implementation of local crisis responses for emergency housing needs. This shift would allow the State to serve as an active facilitator of community conversations and plans – providing supports and technical assistance in addition to flexible funding. It also would offer service providers greater opportunity to implement programs that address the unique housing needs in their communities.

Despite all that has happened during the pandemic, the Department is moving forward with the transition to a community-based response to emergency housing. The COVID response demonstrated that community efforts can yield productive collaborations, tangible pathways for Vermonters experiencing homelessness, and response systems based on specific community needs. Prior to the pandemic, some community members had expressed a concern that the State of Vermont would be abdicating its responsibility by moving to a community-based model. To the contrary, the pandemic response showed – under the most challenging of circumstances – that the State’s role in the emergency housing system can be one that supports community providers through funding, technical assistance, and expertise on best practices to help serve Vermonters facing housing crises.

Accordingly, this emergency housing transition is a component of the AHS Rehousing Plan guiding recovery efforts through the summer and fall of 2020. The transition has been postponed from the original implementation date to a new target of July 1, 2021. Once the transition has been executed, revisiting the remainder of the GA Restructure would be the next programmatic task.

Conclusion

The public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic forced the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to alter and vary its temporary housing rules to accommodate the needs of Vermonters most vulnerable to COVID-19. That effort has been successful in preventing outbreaks of COVID-19 among Vermonters previously homeless or housed in congregate shelter settings. DCF continues to implement the Agency's rehousing effort by connecting applicants with case managers, with Rapid Resolution fund, with housing vouchers, and when necessary emergency shelter. This approach proposes to end family homelessness, streamline pathways to permanent housing and offer the necessary supports for people to be successful in this housing.

The State of Vermont has been at a crossroads regarding how it helps Vermonters experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. The proposal to move forward with rethinking how emergency housing benefits are delivered speaks to an understanding that we must work together to improve upon and strengthen the system of care. This includes the collaborative response to provide critical supports during the COVID-19 pandemic and a commitment to the AHS Rehousing Plan which is dedicated to permanent housing solutions. This is particularly true in light of the crises we face and the opportunities that lay ahead.

Appendix A – Aggregate General Assistance Housing Data (July 2019 – February 2020)

APPENDIX A: Aggregate GA Housing (July 2019 – February 2020)

Housing Applications

| Total # Housing Request | # Housing Requests Granted | # Housing Requests Denied | # Households without Children Granted | # Households without Children Denied | # Households with Children Granted | # Households with Children Denied | Total # Adults Granted | Total # Children Granted |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 13398 | 9153 | 4245 | 6848 | 3518 | 2305 | 727 | 10629 | 4139 |

Granted Housing Categories

| # Catastrophic Grants | # Vulnerable Population Grants | # Vulnerable Points Grants | # Fair Hearing Officer Ordered Grants | # AWC Grants |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| 2412 | 1357 | 22 | 0 | 5365 |

Estimated Housing Costs

| # of Non AWC Uncontracted Nights Granted | Non AWC Average Cost Per Night | Non AWC Estimated Total Costs | # of AWC Uncontracted Nights Granted | AWC Average Cost Per Night | AWC Estimated Total Costs | Combined # Uncontracted Nights Granted | Combined Estimated Total Costs |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 27,747 | \$ 79.12 | \$2,139,877.22 | 9974 | 83.86 | \$791,249.22 | 37,721 | \$2,931,126.44 |

- Total # of Harbor Place Nights: 5,312
- Total # of AWC Harbor Place Nights: 336
- “uncontracted nights” denote those exclusive of the Harbor Place contract

Appendix B – General and Emergency Assistance Denials (July 2019 – February 2020)

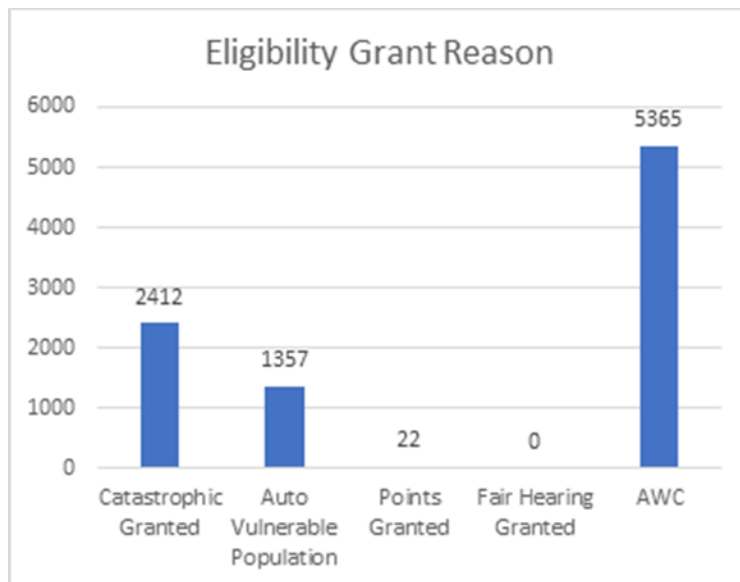
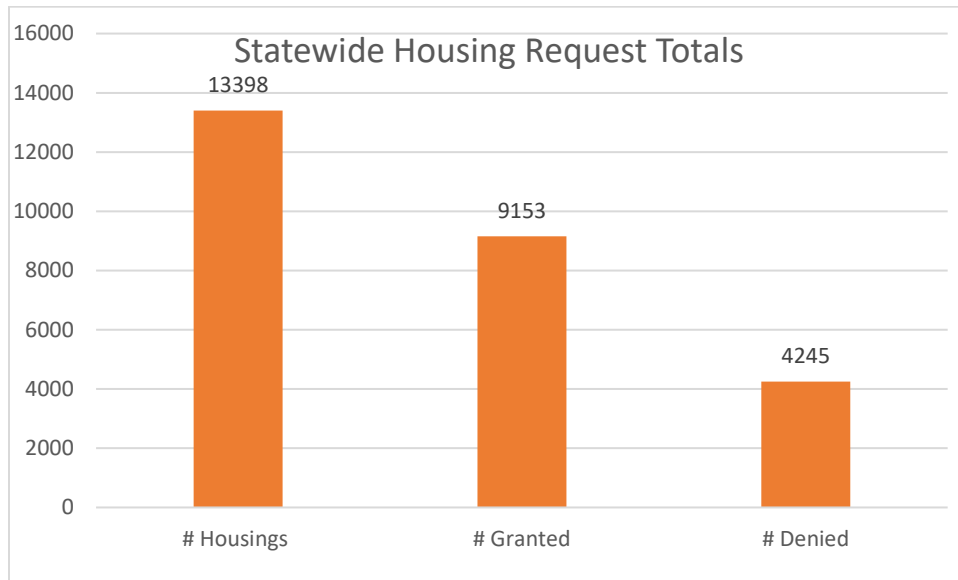
July 2019 - February 2020 GA/EA Denials

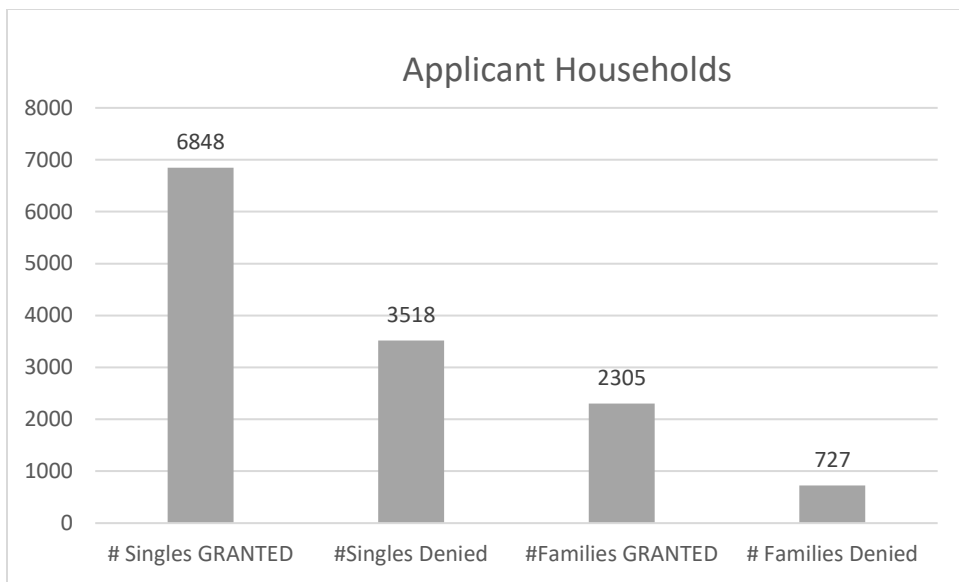
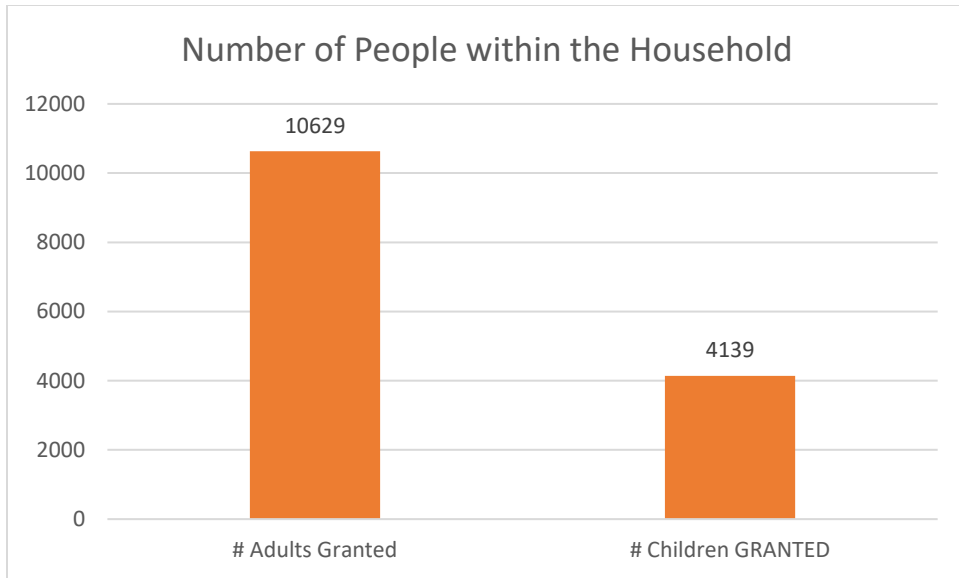
Total Denied Applications

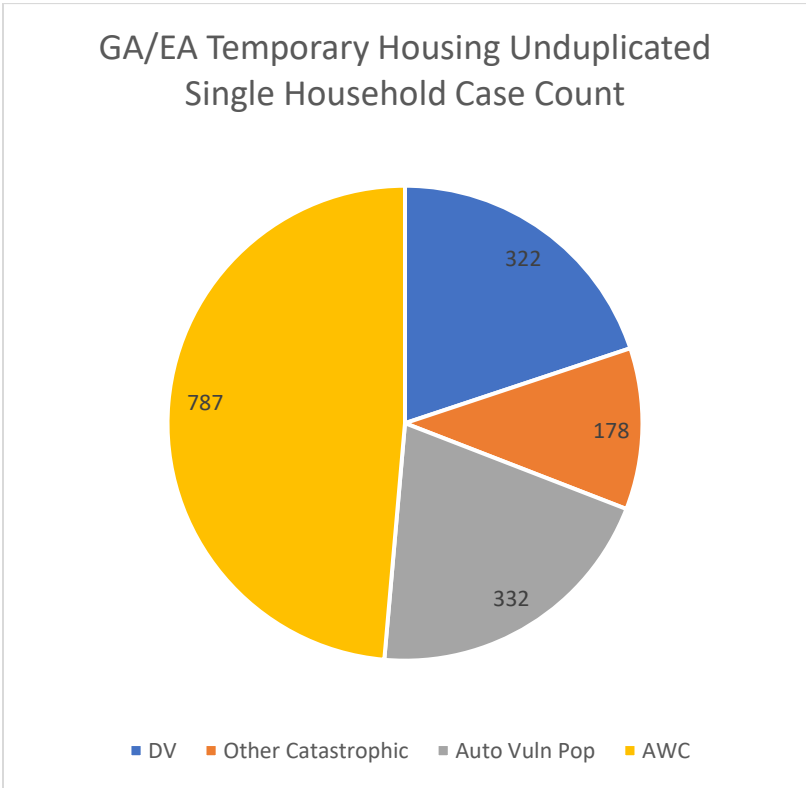
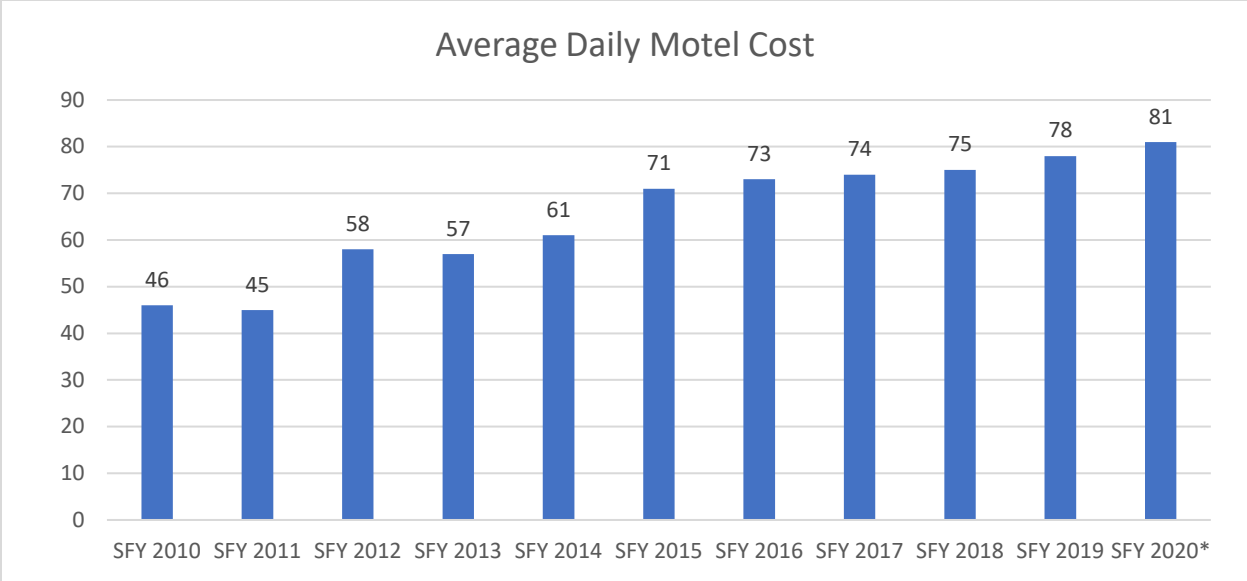
4245

| Households with Adults ONLY | | | | Households with Child(ren) | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|-----|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----|-----|
| | | 3518 | 83% | | | 727 | 17% |
| Top 5 Denial Reasons | | | | Top 5 Denial Reasons | | | |
| 1 | Ineligible | 1471 | 42% | 1 | Has Other Housing Options | 242 | 33% |
| 2 | Has Other Housing Options | 955 | 27% | 2 | Ineligible | 181 | 25% |
| 3 | Verification Required | 268 | 8% | 3 | Max Nights | 70 | 10% |
| 4 | Available Resources | 190 | 5% | 4 | Available Resources | 64 | 9% |
| 5 | Caused Own Homelessness | 172 | 5% | 5 | Caused Own Homelessness | 64 | 9% |

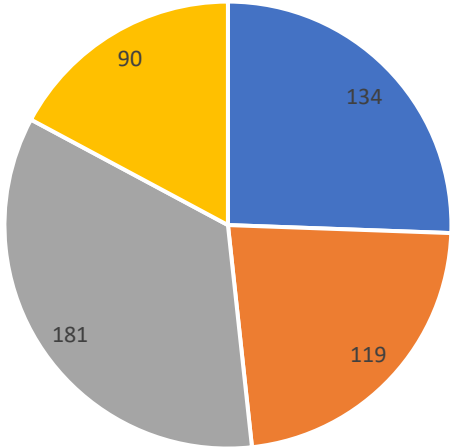
Appendix C – General Assistance Housing Data Tables (July 2019 – February 2020)







GA/EA Temporary Unduplicated Family Household Case Count



■ DV ■ Other Catastrophic ■ Auto Vuln Pop ■ AWC

**Appendix D – Primary Cause of Homelessness
(July 2019 – February 2020)**

| Primary Causes of Homelessness in Vermont | St. Albans | Burlington | Hartford | St. Johnsbury | Brattleboro | Barre | Newport | Rutland | Springfield | Bennington | Morrisville | Middlebury | Statewide Ranking | Combined districts' ranking across state in each category of homelessness |
|--|------------|------------|----------|---------------|-------------|-------|---------|---------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------------|---|
| Benefit Issues (SSI, UC, CS, Voucher, St Assistance) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| Chronic Homelessness | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 12 |
| Could not afford housing | | | | | | | | | | 5 | | | | 1 |
| Domestic Violence/Child Abuse | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 4 | | 4 | 1 | 3 | 11 |
| Eviction with Cause | 5 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 12 |
| Eviction without Cause/Non-renewal | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 12 |
| Job Loss/Unemployment/Underemployment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| Kicked out of Family/Friends | 2 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 12 |
| Overcrowded/Underhoused | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |
| Unexpected Expenses (car repair) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 0 |

| STATEWIDE - Top Five Stated Causes of Homelessness for persons applying for GA Temporary Housing | |
|---|---|
| Chronic Homelessness | 1 |
| Kicked out of Family/Friends | 2 |
| Domestic Violence/Child Abuse | 3 |
| Eviction without Cause/Non-renewal | 4 |
| Eviction with Cause | 5 |

**Appendix E – COVID Hotel Usage
(April 2020 – June 2020)**

| Date | Number of Rooms | Number of Adults | Number of Children | Number of Clients |
|-----------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 4/3/2020 | 963 | 1088 | 188 | 1276 |
| 4/4/2020 | 963 | 1088 | 188 | 1276 |
| 4/5/2020 | 963 | 1088 | 188 | 1276 |
| 4/6/2020 | 1028 | 1158 | 201 | 1359 |
| 4/7/2020 | 1052 | 1189 | 201 | 1390 |
| 4/8/2020 | 1047 | 1184 | 199 | 1383 |
| 4/9/2020 | 1077 | 1230 | 201 | 1431 |
| 4/10/2020 | 1111 | 1270 | 206 | 1476 |
| 4/11/2020 | 1111 | 1270 | 206 | 1476 |
| 4/12/2020 | 1111 | 1270 | 206 | 1476 |
| 4/13/2020 | 1150 | 1310 | 209 | 1519 |
| 4/14/2020 | 1163 | 1324 | 212 | 1536 |
| 4/15/2020 | 1192 | 1366 | 225 | 1591 |
| 4/16/2020 | 1173 | 1347 | 234 | 1581 |
| 4/17/2020 | 1200 | 1377 | 244 | 1621 |
| 4/18/2020 | 1200 | 1377 | 244 | 1621 |
| 4/19/2020 | 1208 | 1385 | 245 | 1630 |
| 4/20/2020 | 1244 | 1433 | 252 | 1685 |
| 4/21/2020 | 1257 | 1442 | 246 | 1688 |
| 4/22/2020 | 1292 | 1480 | 250 | 1730 |
| 4/23/2020 | 1289 | 1474 | 250 | 1724 |
| 4/24/2020 | 1273 | 1495 | 254 | 1749 |
| 4/25/2020 | 1273 | 1495 | 254 | 1749 |
| 4/26/2020 | 1273 | 1495 | 254 | 1749 |
| 4/27/2020 | 1324 | 1517 | 257 | 1774 |
| 4/28/2020 | 1338 | 1531 | 260 | 1791 |
| 4/29/2020 | 1356 | 1542 | 267 | 1809 |
| 4/30/2020 | 1370 | 1562 | 269 | 1831 |
| 5/1/2020 | 1385 | 1606 | 274 | 1880 |
| 5/2/2020 | 1385 | 1606 | 274 | 1880 |
| 5/3/2020 | 1385 | 1606 | 274 | 1880 |
| 5/4/2020 | 1383 | 1614 | 273 | 1887 |
| 5/5/2020 | 1400 | 1604 | 271 | 1875 |
| 5/6/2020 | 1418 | 1628 | 273 | 1901 |
| 5/7/2020 | 1431 | 1638 | 277 | 1915 |
| 5/8/2020 | 1450 | 1666 | 277 | 1943 |
| 5/9/2020 | 1450 | 1666 | 277 | 1943 |

| | | | | |
|-----------|------|------|-----|------|
| 5/10/2020 | 1450 | 1666 | 277 | 1943 |
| 5/11/2020 | 1471 | 1689 | 283 | 1972 |
| 5/12/2020 | 1483 | 1700 | 285 | 1985 |
| 5/13/2020 | 1492 | 1711 | 291 | 2002 |
| 5/14/2020 | 1479 | 1702 | 299 | 2001 |
| 5/15/2020 | 1460 | 1679 | 300 | 1979 |
| 5/16/2020 | 1460 | 1679 | 300 | 1979 |
| 5/17/2020 | 1460 | 1679 | 300 | 1979 |
| 5/18/2020 | 1461 | 1683 | 306 | 1989 |
| 5/19/2020 | 1462 | 1685 | 306 | 1991 |
| 5/20/2020 | 1452 | 1731 | 314 | 2045 |
| 5/21/2020 | 1442 | 1662 | 310 | 1972 |
| 5/22/2020 | 1467 | 1716 | 314 | 2030 |
| 5/23/2020 | 1467 | 1716 | 314 | 2030 |
| 5/24/2020 | 1467 | 1716 | 314 | 2030 |
| 5/25/2020 | 1467 | 1716 | 314 | 2030 |
| 5/26/2020 | 1445 | 1718 | 314 | 2032 |
| 5/27/2020 | 1521 | 1836 | 314 | 2150 |
| 5/28/2020 | 1504 | 1745 | 314 | 2059 |
| 5/29/2020 | 1494 | 1735 | 319 | 2054 |
| 5/30/2020 | 1494 | 1735 | 319 | 2054 |
| 5/31/2020 | 1494 | 1735 | 319 | 2054 |
| 6/1/2020 | 1476 | 1721 | 314 | 2035 |
| 6/2/2020 | 1458 | 1704 | 314 | 2018 |
| 6/3/2020 | 1459 | 1705 | 317 | 2022 |
| 6/4/2020 | 1469 | 1714 | 328 | 2042 |
| 6/5/2020 | 1498 | 1748 | 337 | 2085 |
| 6/6/2020 | 1498 | 1748 | 337 | 2085 |
| 6/7/2020 | 1498 | 1748 | 337 | 2085 |
| 6/8/2020 | 1497 | 1751 | 340 | 2091 |
| 6/9/2020 | 1498 | 1754 | 346 | 2100 |
| 6/10/2020 | 1507 | 1765 | 354 | 2119 |
| 6/11/2020 | 1508 | 1770 | 352 | 2122 |
| 6/12/2020 | 1488 | 1714 | 332 | 2046 |
| 6/13/2020 | 1488 | 1714 | 332 | 2046 |
| 6/14/2020 | 1488 | 1714 | 332 | 2046 |
| 6/15/2020 | 1208 | 1418 | 285 | 1703 |
| 6/16/2020 | 1273 | 1492 | 301 | 1793 |
| 6/17/2020 | 1185 | 1397 | 278 | 1675 |
| 6/18/2020 | 1196 | 1406 | 287 | 1693 |
| 6/19/2020 | 1226 | 1433 | 292 | 1725 |
| 6/20/2020 | 1226 | 1433 | 292 | 1725 |

| | | | | |
|-----------|------|------|-----|------|
| 6/21/2020 | 1226 | 1433 | 292 | 1725 |
| 6/22/2020 | 1201 | 1404 | 281 | 1685 |
| 6/23/2020 | 1243 | 1451 | 278 | 1729 |
| 6/24/2020 | 1242 | 1447 | 280 | 1727 |
| 6/25/2020 | 1269 | 1477 | 292 | 1769 |
| 6/26/2020 | 1255 | 1459 | 290 | 1749 |
| 6/27/2020 | 1255 | 1459 | 290 | 1749 |
| 6/28/2020 | 1255 | 1459 | 290 | 1749 |
| 6/29/2020 | 989 | 1174 | 249 | 1423 |
| 6/30/2020 | 1131 | 1329 | 285 | 1614 |

* Harbor Place is not included after March 1, 2020 as it was designated an isolation and recovery site.

Appendix F – Current Housing Rules



Department for Children and Families
Services
Economic Services Division
280 State Drive
Waterbury, VT 05671-1020

Agency of Human

[fax] 802-241-0460
[toll free] 800-479-6151

General/Emergency Temporary Housing Waiver and Variance of Rules Through March 31, 2021

Due to COVID-19 the General Assistance temporary housing program has been modified to move away from categorical eligibility to better assist with housing Vermonters who are homeless. This program is commonly referred to as the motel voucher program. Below is a statement of the rules that currently govern this program. The authority to waive or vary the rules is in Act 140 Section 13 which amends Act 91 Section 4. Act 140 was signed into law on July 6, 2020. The authority to waive or vary rules is in effect until March 31, 2021. While the Department does not intend on making frequent changes to these rules, please always look for the most current version posted on the Economic Services Division COVID-19 webpage at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/covid19>.

Current Rules August 11, 2020

GA-10 Homeless Vermonter

If you are homeless, live in Vermont, and have nowhere to stay, you may be eligible to have the Economic Services Division (ESD) pay to house you in a hotel/motel.

- **To apply** call the Benefits Services Center at 1-800-479-6151.

GA-20 **GA rule 2603 Definitions**

All definitions in General Assistance rule 2603 apply to these rules.

GA-30 **U.S. Citizen**

You must be a U.S. Citizen or legal alien

GA-40 **Vermont Resident**

You must intend on living in Vermont. You are not eligible for a motel voucher if you have come to Vermont for the purpose of receiving General Assistance. (See 33 V.S.A. 2107).

- Coming to Vermont without a housing plan is evidence that you have come into the state to receive General Assistance.

If you are not planning on staying in Vermont assistance will be limited to that which will get you to a state border. [See 33 V.S.A. 2103(d)].

GA-50 **Shelter Space**

The Department won't house you in a hotel/motel if space is available in a shelter. *We will let you know if shelter space is available when you apply.*

If you have a physical or mental disability:

- Your local shelter may be able to make special arrangements to help you stay there. This is called a *reasonable accommodation*.
- Your ESD worker can help you talk to your local shelter about your need for an accommodation.

If your local shelter can't make a reasonable accommodation so the shelter is accessible to you:

- Please ask the Department for a reasonable accommodation
- If approved and you meet other requirements, a hotel/motel room will be provided.

GA-50.1 **Refusal of Shelter Space or Asked to Leave a Shelter**

The Department won't house you in a hotel/motel if in the last 30 days:

- You did not accept an available shelter space. *OR*
- You were asked to leave a shelter for not following the rules.

GA-60 Voluntarily Left a Place Where You Could Have Stayed

The Department won't house you in a hotel/motel if you voluntarily left a place where you could have stayed in the last 90 days — unless you left for health or safety reasons.

GA-70 Income Limit

You must have gross monthly income at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). This includes everyone's income:

- From all sources.
- Before things like taxes are taken off (*gross income*).

| # People in Household | Maximum Gross Monthly Income (185% of FPL) | # People in Household | Maximum Gross Monthly Income (185% of FPL) |
|-----------------------|--|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | \$1,926 | 6 | \$5,334 |
| 2 | \$2,609 | 7 | \$6,015 |
| 3 | \$3,290 | 8 | \$6,697 |
| 4 | \$3,971 | 9 | \$7,380 |
| 5 | \$4,653 | 10 | \$8,063 |

For each additional person add \$683.

GA-80 Resource Limit

You may not have more than \$2,250 in liquid assets. This includes everyone in the household.

- Liquid assets are cash or assets that can be easily changed to cash. For example: gift cards, bank accounts, retirement funds, savings certificates, stocks, bonds, and trust accounts.
- This does not include an ABLÉ Account or PASS plan.

GA-90 Housing Yourself

If your household's gross monthly income is over the Reach Up basic needs standard for your sized household (see chart below), you will need to house yourself for a time equal to 30% of your gross income base on the calculation below. During that time, the Department will not pay

for your housing. When the Department is not paying for your housing it is up to you where you stay. *The ESD worker will figure out the 30% calculation when you apply.*

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------------------------|
| Number in Household | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| Reach Up Basic Needs Standard | \$585 | \$771 | \$1,011 | \$1,209 | \$1,418 | \$1,560 | \$1,803 | \$2,012 | Add \$193 For each additional person |

How it works:

- If you have income on the day you apply, the Department will not house you for the number of days, rounded down to the nearest whole number, equal to 30 percent of the gross income received on that day, divided by the least expensive daily motel rate available in the district at that time.
- If your household does not receive income on the day you apply, you will be housed for up to 14 days or until the next time your household has income.
- When you have income again, the Department will not house you for the number of days, rounded down to the nearest whole number, equal to 30 percent of the gross income received on that day, divided by the least expensive daily motel rate available in the district at that time.
- If 30 percent of your household’s gross income divided by the least expensive daily motel rate is less than the cost of one day at the lowest motel rate, the Department will continue to house you.

GA-100 Housing Case Management/Coordinated Entry

For the Department to continue to house you in a hotel/motel you must work with a housing agency to find long term housing. *If you need help, we can connect you with the right person when you call to apply for more temporary housing.*

GA-110 Housing Separate Applicant Households Together

Individuals who are not members of the same applicant household (see GA-20) may request to be housed together in the same hotel/motel room.

- The Department will house no more than two separate applicants together.
- You must each complete a separate application and be approved for a hotel/motel voucher individually. *Unless you have a reasonable accommodation to have a caretaker reside with you.*
- Each applicant must indicate at the time of the interview that they would like to be housed with the other individual. *If the Department has safety concerns it may choose to house the applicants separately.*

- Each applicant must continue to meet all program requirements.
- The applicants' income will be considered together and calculated as one household for the purposes of determining the 30 percent income contribution and amount of time you may both need to house yourselves.

GA-120 Period of Ineligibility

You will not be eligible to be placed in a hotel/motel by the Department for a period of time if you are asked to leave a hotel/motel for:

- Violent criminal behavior
- Attempted violent criminal behavior
- Theft from hotel/motel or guests
- Disturbing other guests' quiet enjoyment of the property
- Behavior consistent with use, sale, distribution, manufacturing, or transport of illegal drugs on the property
- Destruction of property, including reckless disregard of basic cleanliness
- Use of lighted tobacco products, tobacco substitutes, or marijuana, in any form, in any space on the property

If it is determined by the Department that you are not eligible for a period, the Department will not pay for you to stay in a hotel/motel during that time. This is called a Period of Ineligibility (POI).

- For a first violation, the POI is 15 days. *You will be rehoused after serving 7 days of the POI if your case worker informs the Department that you are working with them to find permanent housing.*
- For a second and any other violations, the POI will be 30 days.

If you are placed on a period of ineligibility (POI) and you disagree with the decision, you may:

- Ask the Human Services Board for a fair hearing. *You'll get to tell your side of the story. And you can have a person you trust help you.*
- Ask to be housed in another hotel/motel while waiting for the recommendation from the fair hearing officer.
- Call 1-800-889-2047 to see if you qualify for free help from Vermont Legal Aid.

To request a fair hearing, call the Department at 1-800-479-6151. If you ask for a fair hearing, one will be scheduled usually within 10 days. Before the hearing, the Department will give you or your representative a copy of the evidence we will be presenting. If the hearing officer agrees with our decision, the POI will begin right away. If you don't show up to the hearing, the Department will not continue to house you and your POI will begin right away.

If you ask to be rehoused and you do not ask for a fair hearing within three days, your POI will begin.

Please let the Department know if you have a physical, mental, or learning disability that:

- Makes it hard for you to follow the rules at the motel/hotel, or
- Makes it hard for you to participate at a fair hearing.

You may be entitled to ask for a reasonable accommodation. This could include changing how the program is administered to give you an equal opportunity to participate.

RIGHT TO A FAIR HEARING

If you disagree with a decision we made, you may ask for a fair hearing. The Human Services Board will:

- Hold a hearing within 10 days (usually).
- Listen to your side of the story.
- Review the facts fairly and objectively.
- Decide if the decision should be upheld or reversed.

You must ask for a fair hearing within 90 days of getting a notice. To do so, call the Department at 1-800-479-6151 or the Human Services Board at (802) 828-2536. You can get someone you trust to help you.

RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a disability, you may be entitled to program modifications, and/or free aids & services to help you get benefits. This is called *reasonable accommodations*. Examples include:

- Having someone write your answers down.
- Giving you documents in other formats. For example: large print, audio, or Braille.
- Having a support person with you when you talk to us.
- Meeting in your home or by phone.
- Giving you more time to get us the documents we need.

Call 1-800-479-6151 if you need this help.

NEED LEGAL HELP?

Call 1-800-889-2047 to see if you qualify for free help from Vermont Legal Aid.

HAVE QUESTIONS?

Ask your worker or call 1-800-479-6151.

LEARN MORE

Go to <https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/covid19>. You can also call 1-800-479- 6151 to learn more about temporary housing during COVID-19.

If you need interpretation services...

إذا أنت ترغب خدمات الترجمة الفورية اتصل برقم 1-855-247-3092 (Arabic)

Ako su Vam potrebne usluge tumačenja, pozovite 1-855-247-3092. (Bosnian)

စကားပြန် ဝန်ဆောင်မှုလုပ်ငန်းကိုအလိုရှိပါက 1-855-247-3092 သို့ဖုန်းဆက်ခေါ်ပါ။ (Burmese)

Si vous avez besoin de services d'interprétation, appelez le 1-855-247-3092. (French)

Mugihe woba ushaka impfashanyo yo gusigurirwa, hamagara uyu murongo 1-855-247-3092. (Kirundi)

यदि तपाईंलाई दोभाषे सेवाको जरुरत परेमा 1-855-247-3092 मा कल गर्नुहोस्। (Nepali)

Haddii aad u baahan tahay adeegyo turjumaan, wac 1-855-247-3092. (Somali)

Si usted necesita servicios de interpretación, llame al 1-855-247-3092. (Spanish)

Ikiwa unahitaji huduma za ukalimani, piga simu 1-855-247-3092. (Swahili)

Nếu quý vị cần dịch vụ thông ngôn, hãy gọi 1-855-247-3092. (Vietnamese)